

Amendment to Specification

Please amend the following paragraphs:

[00010]This object is fulfilled by the invention in a distinctive manner whereby the spring element, configured as a flat spring, connects the two handgrips together and is situated between the handgrips of the handle in such a way that the spring element, to lock the jaw members in their end positions, can be shifted through a storage-bearing point of one handgrip on the spring element between two end positions that relax the spring element.

[00014]It is further proposed, according to the invention, that the spring element is mounted with one end in the area of the proximal end of one handgrip and with the other end in the center area of the other handgrip. Because of this distancing of the storage-bearing points of the spring element on the handgrips, the pressure that is required in order to press the handgrips together to close the holding portion is reduced.

[00017]Thanks to this design, it is possible, in simple and reliable manner, for the storage-bearing point, on which the spring element is stored in the center area of the handgrip, to be positioned in the lower end position, which locks the holding portion, below a line which connects the pivot point between the rotatable handgrip and the rotatable jaw member with the storage-bearing point of the spring element in the area of the proximal end of the rigid handgrip. This positioning below this imaginary line means that an external force is required to move the handgrip apart again.

[00018]However, in the upper end position that releases the holding portion, the storage-bearing point where the spring element is stored in the center area of the handgrip is situated above a line which connects the pivot point between the rotatable hand-

grip and the rotatable jaw member with the storage-bearing point of the spring element in the area of the proximal end of the rigid handgrip.

[00019]In a second practical embodiment of the invention it is proposed that both handgrips of the handle are configured as a single piece, each rigidly conjoined with one jaw member of the holding portion, and that the handgrips or jaw members are stored so that they can swivel, crossing one another in opposite directions, around a common pivot point. In this pincer-like structure, depending on the position of the storage-bearing point where the spring element is stored in the center area of the one handgrip to the position of the storage-bearing point where the spring element of the other handgrip is stored, the spring element causes the jaw members, aside from an unstable intermediate position, either to be pushed together as far as the closed end position, or to be pushed apart as far as the open end position. The storage-bearing point at which the spring element in the center area of the handgrip is stored is, in this embodiment, arranged on an arc around the pivot point.

[00036]As can further be seen from the illustrations of FIGS. 1a to 1c, a spring element 6 configured as a flat spring is situated between the handgrips 2a and 2b of the handle 2 and is stored with one end on a storage-bearing point 7 in the area of the proximal end of the rigid handgrip 2b and with the other end on a storage-bearing point 8 in the center area of the rotatable handgrip 2a. The spring element 6 is stored in the center area of the rotatable handgrip 2a, in the illustrated embodiment of the needle holder 1, on the free end of an extension 9 that is installed on the rotatable handgrip 2a and protrudes into the space between the two handgrips 2a, 2b.

[00039]In the open end position of the holding portion 3 illustrated in FIG. 1a, the handgrips 2a and 2b are pressed apart by means of the spring element 6 that has been pretensioned in the opening direction of the handgrips 2a, 2b. This position, in which the storage-bearing point 8, where the spring element 6 is stored in the center area of the handgrip 2a, is situated above a line L1 which connects the pivot point 5 between the

rotatable handgrip 2a and the rotatable jaw member 3a with the storage-bearing point 7 of the spring element 6 in the area of the proximal end of the rigid handgrip 2b, constitutes an end position of the handgrips 2a, 2b of the handle 2 or of the jaw members 3a, 3b of the holding portion 3, in which end position the spring element 6 locks the handgrips 2a, 2b or the jaw members 3a, 3b, since the handgrips 2a, 2b can be moved out of this end position only by exerting an external force working against the spring force of the spring element 6.

[00040] Thus, in order to grasp a needle, the surgeon presses the handgrips 2a, 2b toward one another against the force of the spring element 6 until the needle holder 1 assumes the position illustrated in FIG. 1b, in which the jaw members 3a, 3b of the holding portion 3 are closed holding the needle. In this position the storage-bearing point 8 is found on or somewhat above the line L1, which connects the pivot point 5 with the storage-bearing point 7.

[00041] Additional pressing together of the handgrips 2a, 2b causes the spring element 6 to be further bent until the storage-bearing point 8 crosses the line L1, which connects the pivot point 5 with the storage-bearing point 7, since the connection between the handgrip 2a and jaw member 3a buckles toward the pivot point 5 and assumes the second end position depicted in FIG. 1c, in which the handgrips 2a, 2b are pressed together and the jaw members 3a, 3b of the holding portion 3 are closed. Because the spring element 6 is relaxed slightly once again on crossing the line L1, the handgrips 2a, 2b are again locked in this end position, since it requires the exertion of an external force to press the handgrips 2a, 2b apart again against the spring force of the spring element 6.

[00047] Also in this second embodiment of the needle holder 1, as can be seen from FIGS. 2a and 2b, a spring element 6 configured as a flat spring is situated between the handgrips 2a and 2b of the handle 2, and this spring element 6 is stored with one end in a storage-bearing point 7 in the area of the proximal end of the one handgrip 2b

and with the other end at a storage-bearing point 8 in the center area of the other handgrip 2a. The storage-bearing of the spring element 6 in the center area of the rotatable handgrip 2a, also in this illustrated second embodiment of the needle holder 1, takes place at the free end of an extension 9 situated on the handgrip 2a and protruding into the space between the two handgrips 2a, 2b.

[00049]However, the spring element 6 is locked in its two end positions, in the second embodiment, by mounting the storage-bearing point 8, where the spring element 6 is stored in the center area of the handgrip 2a, on an arc K around the pivot point 4.

[00050]Upon pressing together the handgrips 2a, 2b, starting from the open end position as seen in FIG. 2a, all the way to the closed end position according to FIG. 2b, the spring element 6 is bent further against its spring force, because the distance between the storage-bearing points 8 and 7 is at first reduced until the arc K cuts a line L2, which cuts the pivot point 4 with the storage-bearing point 7 of the spring element 6 in the area of the proximal end of the handgrip 2b. As soon as the handgrips 2a, 2b are further pressed together, the spring element 6 is relaxed again because the distance between the storage-bearing points 7 and 8 is larger again. Because the spring element 6 is loosened again in crossing the line L2, the handgrips 2a, 2b are again stopped in this end position, since it requires the exertion of an external force to press the handgrips 2a, 2b apart again against the spring force of the spring element 6.

Please amend the abstract as follows:

The invention relates to a medical grasping and holding instrument with a handle consisting of two handgrips and with a holding portion that consists of at least two jaw members and can be activated by the handle. The jaw members of the holding portion can be locked by means of a spring element both in an end position that releases the holding portion and in an end position that locks the holding portion. In order to create a medical grasping and holding instrument that is of simple construction, can be operated with just one hand, and is easy to clean, it is proposed with this invention that the spring element, configured as a flat spring, for locking the jaw members (3a, 3b) in their end positions is mounted between the handgrips of the handle so as to connect the two handgrips to one another in such a way that the spring element can be moved by way of a storage-bearing point of a handgrip at the spring element between two end positions that release the spring element.